Pakistan nationals, the President stated that Pakistan had not given any asylum to any such persons.

(e) The Government has consistently conveyed that action by Pakistan on the list of 20 will demonstrate its sincerity to permanently stop cross border terrorism against India. Government will take necessary measures to safeguard the country's security.

Totalisation Agreement with USA

952. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and the USA are going to enter into "Totalisation Agreement" in order to benefit software and other professionals of India working in US on a short-term contract;

(b) if so, the details of the proposed agreement; and

(c) by when the agreement is going to be signed by India and the USA?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (c) Yes. We have proposed entering into a bilateral Totalisation Agreement with the United States to avoid duplication in payment of social security by Indian professionals working in the United States on temporary work visas.The draft Agreement has been shared with U.S. Government, whose comments are awaited. Details of the proposed Agreement are yet to be firmed up. No date can as yet be indicated for signing the Agreement.

Denial of Permission to Cover Pak Parliamentary Election

953. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indian media persons were denied permission to cover Parliamentary Election by the Pakistan Government;

(b) the number of Indian scribes who had sought permission; and

(c) the reasons for which they were denied permission.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) The Government has seen some reports in the Indian and Pakistani media on possible denial of visas to Indian journalists for travel to Pakistan for the coverage of Parliamentary elections in that country.

(b) The Indian media is free to travel abroad and to approach foreign missions for visas without any prior permission from MEA. It is, therefore, not possible for the Government to furnish any credible factual information as sought by the Hon'ble Member of Parliament.

(c) Does not arise in view of (b).

Assistance to Afghanistan

954. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of air buses, aircrafts India has gifted to Afghanistan, recently;

(b) the number of passenger buses that India has given to that country; and

(c) the details of the other assistance provided by India to Afghanistan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) An agreement was signed on 2nd September 2002 between the Government of India, Air India, Transitional Islamic Government of Afghanistan and Arina Afghan Airlines for gifting three aircraft from Air India to Ariana Afghan Airlines.

(b) 50 buses have been provided to the Afghan government for public transport in Kabul city.

(c) India has provided extensive humanitarian, financial and project assistance to Afghan reconstruction. Out of the total financial commitment of US$10 million for reconstruction and rehabilitation projects in Afghanistan, US$10 million was transferred to the Afghan government as budget subsidy. Prime Minister has also approved a sum of US$ 10 million for various projects related to Afghanistan. Some of the major projects that have been implemented include supply of medical stores and medical